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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the issue of educational equity, principles of systems analysis, systems approaches in the educational milieu, the evaluation aspect of the systems approach, and application of the systems approach to preventing disproportionate enrollment of Hispanics and Blacks in special education classes in Holyoke, Massachusetts. The literature on the systems approach and its application to education are reviewed. The importance of the evaluation component is stressed with diagrams applying the systems approach to instructional systems. The Holyoke application stemmed from a state requirement that the school system submit a remedial plan designed to address the problem of disproportionate placement of Hispanics and Blacks. The plan's development resulted in determination of eight goals with related objectives. Goals included appropriate identification and referral of minority students to special education and identification of the primary home language of all students. Also identified are eight elements (such as support of decision makers and change agents) seen to be key elements in ameliorating possible prima facie denial or actual denial of Hispanic and Black student's rights through disproportionate enrollment in special education programs. (DB)

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A SYSTEMS APPROACH FOR AMELIORATING POSSIBLE PRIMA FACIE DENIAL OF HISPANIC/BLACK STUDENTS' RIGHTS THROUGH DISPROPORTIONATE ENROLLMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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One of the most perplexing problems facing the Special Education Administration specifically and the educational establishment in general, today, is the issue of disproportionate enrollment of minority students. This issue of over-or under-enrollment of minority students in special education threatens to be one of the most critical educational/Judicial issues of the 1980's.

This concept of ethnic or disproportionate enrollment in special education programming is neither new nor unique to the special education teacher, administrator or state and federal departmental regulatory staffs. The phenomena that is new, however, is the local educational agency which now must not only demonstrate a compelling educational reason for the current ethnic or racial enrollment in the special education programs but must also insure and demonstrate that there is an ongoing series of processes and procedures designed to insure a "Sociological Jurisprudence" in the referral, evaluation and placement decisions of minority and non-minority children into special education programming.

In considering educational equity in the context of "Sociological Jurisprudence," one finds the concept of equal educational opportunity basic to most court cases on educational issues. If one looks at those specific court cases only involving special education, such as PARC or the Larry P. case, the fundamental issue is that in one way or another there is an actual or an alleged violation of equal educational opportunity.

What is equal educational opportunity? Yudof cites three definitions:[1]

1. Every child must have equal access to schooling resources unless a compelling state interest has been demonstrated to the contrary.

2. All public school students, regardless of race or ethnic origin, must be treated in a non-discriminatory manner.

3. Inequalities among individuals in the effectiveness of resources and the outcomes of schooling must be compensated for by the state.

Violations of equal educational opportunity fall into two main categories. These categories are:

1. Racial segregation,

2. Resource distribution.

Let us briefly look at the subcategories of equal educational opportunity volations in the area of resource distribution. These subcategories are:

a. Availability of educational services,

b. Suspensions and expulsions,

c. Due process,

d. Language exclusion.

With this brief introduction in mind, let us briefly consider the Holyoke experience. Before one can begin to comprehend the Holyoke experience and Holyoke's reaction to that experience, one must first consider the practical application of a systems approach to the Holyoke response.

Let us examine some of the theoretical as well as the working definitions of a systems approach. One such definition views a systems approach as "a scientific method for moving a goal to its attainment."[2] John McManama, in his significant work, Systems Analysis for Effective School Administration, defines a systems approach as "a strategy which utilizes analysis, design and management to attain a stated goal effectively and efficiently."[3]

A systems approach can also be used for the design of man-made entities. Component strategies of this methodology include the formulation of performance objectives, the analysis of functions and components, the scheduling, the training and tests of the system, installation and quality control."[4]

Still another viewpoint is that the "systems approach represents a set of procedures whereby thorough analysis of a system may be undertaken."[5] L. C. Silvern summarized these four elements which usually follow a set order:

(a) Analysis is performed on the existing system to identify the parts and interrelationships.

(b) Synthesis is performed to combine these various elements together with new elements.

(c) Models are constructed to predict the effectiveness of the system.

(d) Simulation is carried out prior to implementation of the system in real life.[6]

In reviewing these definitions of systems approach we can readily see the following points of commonality:

(1) It is a methodology utilizing scientific principles.

(2) It is a framework for developing a delivery system that is viable.

(3) It is an approach that builds in the concept of feedback for sound management.

Bela H. Benathy further describes the most conspicious aspects for the systems approach as:

1. An insistence upon a clear definition of the purpose of the system, and upon the formulation of performance expectations, stated specifically enough to enable the

construction of criteron measurer that will reveal evidence of the degree to which expected performance has been attained.

2. The examination of the characteristics of the input.

3. The consideration of alternatives and the identification of what has to be done and how, by whom or by what; when and where, as so to ensure that the predetermined performance will be attained.

4. The implementation of the system and the testing of its output for the purposes of measuring the degree to which performance expectations are being met and assessing the efficiency of systems operations.

5. The identification and implementation of any adjustments needed in order to ensure the attainment of the purpose and optimize systems output and system economy.[7]

SYSTEMS APPROACHES AND THE EDUCATIONAL MILIEU

With the above information in mind let us apply the idea of a systems approach to the educational complex. Banathy believes that to transform the systems approach to the realm of education the educational leaders will be required to;

1. Formulate specific learning objectives, clearly stating whatever the learner is expected to be able to do, know , and feel as an outcome of his learning experiences.

2. Develop tests to measure the degree to which the learner has attained the objectives.

3. Examine the input characteristics and capabilities of the learners.

4. Identify whatever has to be learned so that the learner will be able to perform as expected.

5. Consider alternatives from which to select learning content, learning experiences, components, and resources needed to achieve the stated objectives.

6. Install the system and collect information from the findings of performance testing and systems evaluations.

7. Regulate the system. The feedback from testing and evaluation will serve as a basis upon which the system will be changed--by design--in order to ensure every-improving learning achievement and optimum systems economy.[8]

In a similar vein, John McManama identified the three operations of a systems approach as: "(1) analyzing what needs to be done, (2) designing the system, and (3) managing the systems."[9] Applying this to the educational realm he continues to state that "it is important to keep in mind the hierarchial level which is being considered when we refer to any of these operations."[10] In addition, it is of extreme importance to determine at what instructional level one is working at when reference to any of these operations is being considered. The following matrix will illustrate how distinctions can be made between operation and the hierarchial level involved.

THE OPERATIONS OF AN INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM AT THREE HIERARCHIAL LEVELS

	PURPOSE	STRUCTURE	PROCESS
Goal Level a	Educational Goals	Organizational Structure	Process Decisions
Program Level b	Program Objectives	Program Structure	Instructional Strategies
Performance Level c	Performance Objectives	Unit of Instruction	Instructional Tactics

[9] John McManama, Systems Analysis For Effective School Administration (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, Inc., 1971, P. 63)

F. Coit Butler, in his book, entitled Instructional Systems Development for Vocational and Technical Training, points out that "an instructional system is actually never complete, because it is a dynamic process, not a static product; also, it is a continuing and concurrent reassessment of the reassessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the instruction."[11]

A. J. Romiszowski illustrates how the concepts of an educational systems approach is in some way similar to cybernectics systems theory. "Three main characteristics of cybernetics systems theory seem to be particularly relevant to educational systems: (1) educational systems are nothing if not probabilistic; (2) educational systems have a purpose and, '3) educational systems are pliable in that their concern is to link the input and output by appropriate parameters."[12]

Lastly, F. Coit Butler, applying the systems approach theory, defines a training system as:

> "A set of interrelated, interacting, precisely-controlled learning experiences that are designed to achieve a specific set of training objectives, but organized into a unified, dynamic whole which is responsive and adaptive to the individual student while fulfilling specific job-relevant training criteria."[13]

THE EVALUATION ASPECT OF THE SYSTEMS APPROACH

In viewing the various definitions of systems approaches and the implications for education in developing instructional or educational systems one very important variable must be neither overlooked nor relegated to a minor role. That variable is evaluation. Evaluation in a systems approach in all probability forms the nucleus for information about the operations of that

system and provides the necessary feedback for sound systems management or change by design.

Banathy states that "the effectiveness of an instructional system can be measured by assessing the degree to which it provides for the learner a system of learning,"[14] and reporting the degree of learning.

John McManama in discussing the development of an instructional system clearly points out that one of the decisions related to instructional design must be made with direct reference to the program objectives and that is how learning will be evaluated.[15] He further points out that evaluation must be responsive to both management control and purpose at each hierarchial level.[16]

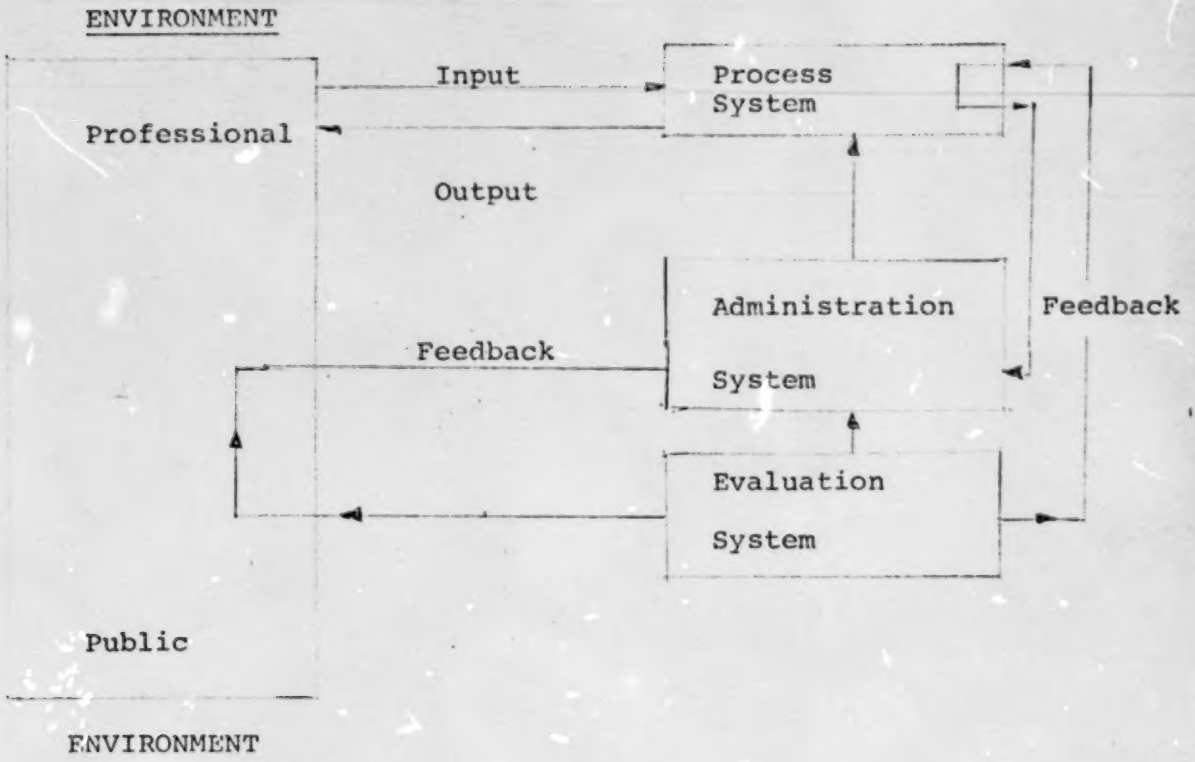
McManama defines evaluation as "a straightforward process of feeding back information to the learner about his progress."[17]

Utilizing the concept of the black-box theory and the three sub-systems of that theory, we can readily see its application to the design, implementation and management vis-a-vis evaluation of the instructional system in question. The three subsystems of this black box theory are:

(1) The process system, which contains the the instructions necessary for the change to take place on the input;

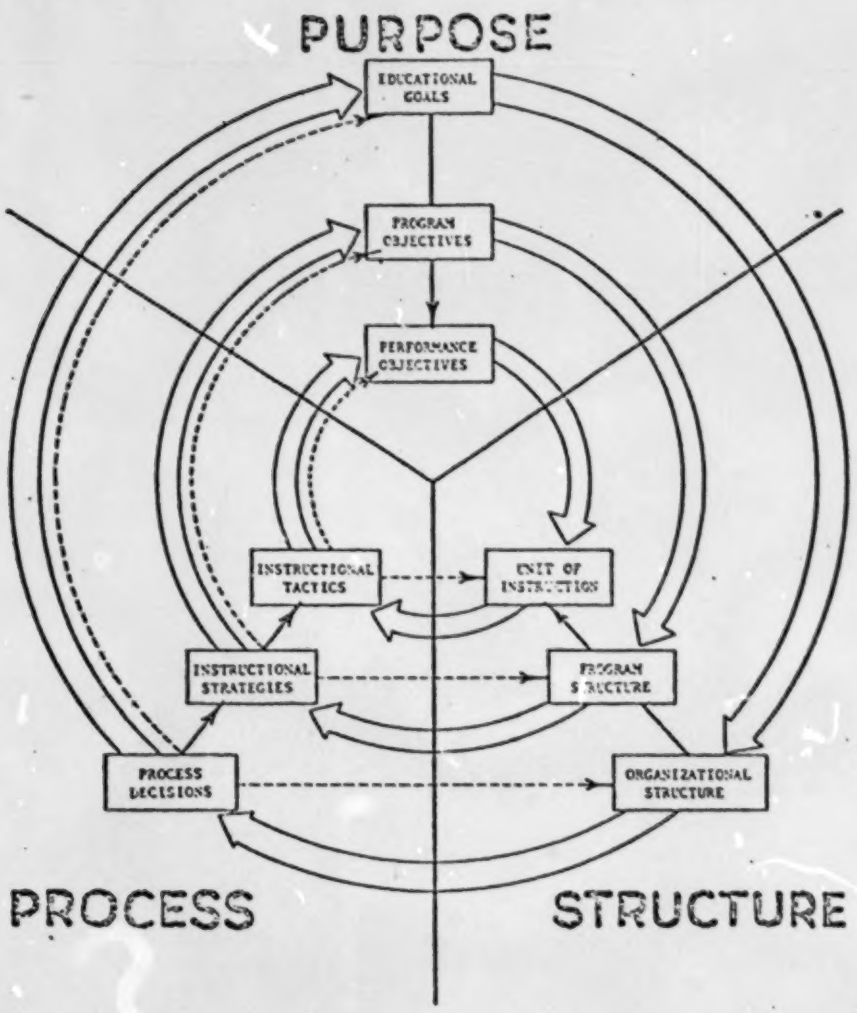
(2) The administration system, which is responsible for the ordering and sequencing of resources within the process;

(3) The evaluation system, which is responsible for the provision of information to the administrative system and environment on the process function of the system.[18]


ENVIRONMENT
Professional
Input
Process System
Output
Administration System
Feedback
Feedback
Evaluation System
Public
ENVIRONMENT

THE OPERATIONS OF AN INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM AT THREE HIERARCHIAL LEVELS

(Flow Chart Model)[b]



Finally, it must be remembered that evaluation leads directly to a redesign of objectives, a reassessment of programs and priorities and allocation of resources.[19] Since a system simply defined is the entity possessing an input, a process and an output,[20] the concern of evaluation centers around the total systems operation.

THE HOLYOKE EXPERIENCE

Background

In June, 1978, the Massachusetts Advocacy Center issued a report with the title, Double Jeopardy, which asserted that minority students were enrolled in special education programs in the public schools in Massachusetts at a rate substantially disproportionate to enrollment of white, native English-speaking students, in violation of GLC 71B, S. C.

That statute provides that the Department of Education shall:

(1) Annually review the special education placement data filed by local school systems;

(2) Notify those systems if their data reveals a "substantially disproportionate" placement of certain groups into special education programs, which constitutes a prima facie denial of equal educational opportunity;

(3) Investigate and hold public hearing into a system prima facie denial; and

(4) Order systems that cannot show compelling educational reason for the disproportionate placement and submit remedial plan to eliminate the denial of equal educational opportunities.

The Bureau of Program Development and Evaluation, Division of Special Education conducted an analysis of the enrollment date reported by local districts in the October, 1978 school census. The steps in this procedure were:

(a) Identification of communities with significant Black and Hispanic student enrollment. Fifty school districts were selected.

(b) Identification of communities with significant Black and Hispanic enrollment in special education. Thirty-seven communities were identified.

(c) Eleven of these thirty-seven communities were participants in the METCO program. These communities were set aside for joint follow-up between the Division of Special Education and the Bureau of Equal Education Opportunity.

(d) An intensive analysis was conducted of the remaining twenty-six communities to determine if there were patterns of disproportionate enrollment of Black and Hispanic students in special education programs.

Through this analysis nine communities were identified where there was a disproportionate enrollment of Black and Hispanic students in special education programs. Those communities were Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Holyoke, Lowell, Lynn, Springfield, Woburn and Worcester.

In the remaining seventeen communities, some problem areas were noted but there was not a pattern of disproportionate enrollment.

On January 25, 1979, Commissioner Anrig met with the superintendents of the nine communities (or their representatives) to inform them of the problem of disproportionate enrollment in their systems and of the action intended by the Department. That meeting was followed by the sending of a formal letter of notification to

each of the nine superintendents and requesting that they each submit a remedial plan designed to address the problem of disproportionate placement.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOLYOKE'S PLAN

In the development of a systems approach for ameliorating possible prima facie denial of Hispanic and Black students' rights through disproportiionate enrollment in special education classes, a school system must first establish whether or not it (meaning the school system) provided for a flexible and uniform system of special education program opportunities for all children requiring special education; and to prevent denial of equal education opportunities on the basis of national origin . . . (and) race . . . in the provision of these special education services. 1972 C 766 S 1.

GOAL: To provide for the appropriate identification and referral of minority student to special education.

OBJECTIVE 1: To provide mandatory in service training to school principals, regular, Transitional Bilingual Education (herinafter, "TBE") and special education staff.

OBJECTIVE 2: To insure that the individual schools maintain accurate and current pre-referral records.

OBJECTIVE 3: To insure that all students who have been referred for special education services must have the opportunity to have had modifications made within the regular school program unless referred for emergency evaluation, pursuant to section 331.0 of the regulations implementing c 766 of the Acts of 1972 (hereinafter "c. 766 Regs.") by the Director of Special Services, or referred by the parent pursuant to section 315.0 of the c. 766 Regs.

OBJECTIVE 4: To increase the Black and other language speaking special education staff.

GOAL 2: To identify the primary home language of all students in the Holyoke Public Schools and assess language dominance proficiency as well as achievement.

The Voluntary Lau Compliance Plan which will be submitted to the Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (O.C.R.)/H.E.W.) by respondents in Hispanic Parents Advisory Council v. Moriarty et. al., (O.C.R./H.E.W.Complaint No. 01-79-1024) including any modifications thereto required by O.C.R./H.E.W. for final approval is incorporated herein as containing the tasks and objectives under Goal 2.

GOAL 3: To provide appropriate testing and assessment of minority students evaluated for special education placement

OBJECTIVE 1: To utilize non-discriminatory assessment techniques in the evaluation of minority students.

OBJECTIVE 2: To provide for the evaluation of Black and LEP children within the time frames established by M.G.L. c.718 and implementing regulations for children who will be referred.

OBJECTIVE 3: To provide bilingual special education assessments for limited English proficiency students who have special needs.

GOAL 4: To provide an individualized special education program for minority children in need of special education.

OBJECTIVE 1: To determine the appropriate placement of Black and Hispanic students currently enrolled in program prototype 502.3 and 502.4 and 502.2i.

GOAL 5: To increase educational program alternatives within regular and special education in the Holyoke Public Schools.

OBJECTIVE 1: To insure that section 322.1 (n) of the c. 766 Regs. is carefully adhered to in the development of each I.E.P. Each team must be specific in the changes in the learner and/or the school environment that must take place before the child can be placed

in a less restrictive program prototype. Inherent in this idea is that the team must answer three basic questions:

1. Can the child be provided services in his/her neighborhood school?

2. If yes, how? If not, why not?

3. What modifications can be made to serve the child in his/her neighborhood school and/or in a less restrictive program?

OBJECTIVE 2: To tabulate quarterly the section of the educational plan on "less restrictive environments" and, after analyzing date, to develop appropriate programs and staffing to increase program options. This analysis will be by school as well as system-wide

GOAL 6: To provide appropriate staffing for serving the needs of minority children in special education.

OBJECTIVE 1: To hire additional staff for September, 1979, or as soon as possible thereafter.

GOAL 7: To provide for community interaction with the Special Education Program.

OBJECTIVE 1: To develop meaningful forms and explanation guides for parents in their dominant language.

GOAL 8: To monitor the implementation of the remedial plan and evaluate the effectiveness of the special education program for minority students.

OBJECTIVE 1: To maintain data on the placement and status of minority children referred and/or placed in special education programs.

OBJECTIVE 2: To disseminate information on placements and status of evaluation to appropriate personnel.

OBJECTIVE 3: To provide a field supervisor to monitor the identification placement and ongoing I.E.P. implementation for minority students.

Advocacy groups and state and federal officials charged with mon toring special education in Holyoke have been hurled into the

process of development of future school programs because of legislated rules pertaining to the denial of equal educational opportunity and because a school system's special education pupil-data indicates either or both an over-enrollment or under-enrollment in special education.

The success or failure of a school district's attempts at ameliorating possible prima facie denial or actual denial of Hispanic and Black students' rights through disproportionate enrollment in special education programs is determined by eith key elements. These elements are:

(1) The leadership of the Superintendent of Schools and the policy initiatives of the local School Board.

(2) The administrative support of the key decision-makers and charge agents in the school district; namely: the Assistant Superintendent in charge of personnel, the Director of curriculum and instruction, and the Building Principals.

(3) The appropriate staffing and commensurate skills of the Special Education Staff.

(4) The active and ongoing involvement of a community task force composed of individuals who represent the various populations in the community.

(5) The establishment of a formal compliance system.

(6) The establishment of a special education managerial system that personifies the intent of the remedial plan.

(7) The development of an ongoing data collection and validation process related toeach and every objective of the remedial plan.

(8) The joint cooperation between the school district and the State Department of Education, in the ongoing monitoring process of the remedial plan.

FOOTNOTES

[1]M. G.Yudof,"Equal Educational Opportunity and the Courts." Texas Law Review, 1973, 51 411-405

[2]John McManama, System Analysis for Effective School Administration (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, Inc., 1971, P. 21.

[3]Ibid. p. 23

[4]Bela H. Banathy, Instructional Systems, (Belmont, California, Feron Publishers, 1968), p. 91

[5]Peter Hodge, "The Application of General Systems Theory to Secondary Education," Systems Approach to Education and Training, ed..by A. J. Romiszowski (London: Kogan Page, 1970 p. 72

[6]L. C. Silvern,"Systems Approach--What Is It?" Educational Technology, Vol III No. 16, pp. 5-6 cited by Peter Hodge. "The Application of General Systems Theory to Secondary Education and Training," ed. by A. J. Romiszowski (London: Kogan Page, 1970)

[7]Bela H. Banathy, Instructional Systems (Belmont, CaliforniaL Fearon Publishers, 1968), 21-22

[8]Ibid. p 22

[9]John McManama, Systems Analysis for Effective School Administration, (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, Inc, 1971), p. 61

[10]Ibid, p. 62

[11]F. Coit Butler, Instructional Systems Development for Vocational and Technical Training, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Educational Technology Publications, 1972), p. 52.

[12]A. J. Romiszowski, "Systems Approaches to Education and Training--An Introduction" in The Systems Approach to Education and Training, ed. by A. J. Romiszowski (London: Kogan Page, 1970), p. 19.

[13]F. Coit Butler, Instructional Systems Development For Vocational and Technical Training (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Educational Technology Publishers, 1968) p. 26.

[14]Bela H. Banathy, Instructional Systems, (Belmont, California: Fearon Publishers, 1968), p. 26.

[15]John McManama, Systems Analysis For Effective School Administration, (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Co., 1971). p. 78.

[16]Ibid. p. 62

[17]Ibid. p. 8.

[18]Ralph A. Van Dusseldorp, Duane R. Richardson, and Walter J. Foley, Educational Decision-Making Through Operations Research (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971), p. 63.

[19]Report of the First National Conference on PPBES in Education, (Chicago: Research Corporation of ASB), p. 45, cited by Robert F. Alioto and J. A. Jungherr, Operational PPBS for Education (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971), p. 10.

[20]Phi Delta Kappa National Study Committee on Evaluation, Educational Evaluation and Decision Making (Bloomington, Illinois: E. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1971) pp. 125, 126.